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CIA Secretly Claims

Credit for Dubcek Rise

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WASHINGTON — The Central Intelligence Agency has secretly claimed a large share of credit for the rise of the liberal and ill-fated Dubcek regime in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The specific claim is that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty — two CIA broadcasting stations in West Germany — were instrumental in provoking the ouster of Antonin Novotny, a pro-Soviet Stalinist, as head of the Czech Communist party.

Alexander Dubcek replaced Novotny in January, 1968 and established a major program of liberation that led to the Soviet invasion the following August.

IN JUSTIFYING the invasion, Moscow alleged that members of the Dubcek regime were plotting with Western agents to upset the Communist system in Czechoslovakia.

But Senate sources, who have investigated the activities of RFE and RL, discounted any parallel to the Hungarian uprising in 1956, when RFE was accused of encouraging the insurgents to expect the United States to intervene militarily against the Russians.

A close check of subsequent transmissions, one source said, showed that the two stations have scrupulously avoided any statements implying that the United States might come to the aid of liberal, anti-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe.

THE FATE of RFE and RL is in the hands of a Senate-House conference committee debating how to shift their operations from the CIA to above-board government control. Emergency financing for the stations ends today but enough CIA funds are thought to be on hand to keep them going until Congress finally makes up its mind.

The CIA's role in the events in Czechoslovakia came to light in a confidential report by the Council on Foreign Relations that has been obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times.

The report contains a digest of a discussion between several former high-ranking CIA officials and others in New York on Jan. 8, 1968, three days after Dubcek replaced Novotny.

AMONG THOSE taking part were the late Allen Dulles, first director of the CIA, and Richard Bissell, former deputy director for plans (clandestine operations).

During the discussion, one of the participants, obviously relying upon CIA information, declared: "A couple of much-criticized public media projects (cited by name) had proven of value, as the fall of Novotny in Czechoslovakia suggested."

Other reliable intelligence sources confirmed that the censored projects cited were RFE and RL. The sources said the two stations successfully disparaged Novotny as an antiquated Stalinist and played up the possibility of reform through utopian socialism.